

ACADEMIC SENATE RETREAT MINUTES

DATE: August 19, 2003

PRESENT:	St. John Robinson	Doug Brown
	Sandie Rietz	Paul Bauer
	Audrey ConnerRosberg	Keith Edgerton
	Randall Gloege	Alan Davis
	Connie Landis	Matt Redinger
	Janie Park (ex-officio)	

ABSENT: George Madden
Mark Hardt (*excused*)

Randy Rhine (ex-officio)	George White (ex-officio)
Dan Zirker (ex-officio)	John Cech (ex-officio)
Joe Michels (ex-officio)	Terrie Iverson (ex-officio)
Ray Champ (ex-officio)	Curt Kochner (ex-officio)

PRESIDING: Keith Edgerton, Chair

Keith Edgerton called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. on August 19, 2003, in the Beartooth Lounge of the Student Union.

I. Budget

While the Senators ate, Dr. Edgerton requested that Janie Park, Provost, review the budget situation. Dr. Park stated that we are cutting 1.2 million dollars, but much of it will come from places not immediately noticeable, such as the part-time faculty budget and funds set aside for special circumstances. No departmental budgets will be cut.

Enrollment is up 100 FTE at the COT. The senior campus is running at about the same FTE as last year, but it needs to be higher. A big influx of students is needed to reach the numbers we need to fund the budget that has been set up.

Tuition has been increased, and it results in a cost of \$200 more per semester for a full-time student. This does not seem to have affected our enrollment. Tuition is supposed to

be raised another 12% next year as well. On paper, we should not have a deficit for next year (04-05), but a number of things could change to alter that situation.

II. Letter to George Benedict

The letter was accepted with changes and will be sent.

III. Graduation Ceremonies

Dr. Edgerton stated that it was noted in a discussion that many faculty do not attend commencement. He proposed to the Chancellor that the administration pick up the cost of robe rentals and so on, to help encourage faculty to attend. The Chancellor agreed to fund a "pilot project" to pay for the clothing costs. In return, the Academic Senate should figure out a way to get more faculty at commencement through other means than financial enticements.

It was noted that many faculty see it as a duty to go. It is a send-off for the students, as well as a chance to meet their families. It is also a statement to the community about this University.

It was cited that there is not a great deal of information available about commencement, except the letter from Sue Hart saying, *if* you will attend, please call. We need a mechanism at the department level to sign up for commencement, as well as reminders through the semester about attending. A tangible commitment is needed.

It was stated that perhaps at the opening meeting of the year, the Chancellor or the Senate Chair could state that this is not only encouraged, but expected. It was noted that this should come from faculty, not administration. The loss of the community feeling among the faculty should also be addressed, with this as a way to regain some of that feeling.

It was decided that at the first Senate meeting of the year (September 11) a letter should be decided upon to send out to all faculty, with a form that is to be returned to the department chair.

It was suggested that a list be periodically sent out through the year to all faculty listing who has signed up, and for those who have not, a blank line be printed with that faculty member's name listed next to it. It will be obvious who has not signed up, thus exerting a little peer pressure.

It was also noted that departments are facing serious problems. The Senate is not focusing on just commencement as a cure-all. This is part of a larger problem.

IV. New Senate Role in Hiring Determinations

Dr. Edgerton stated that this summer he proposed to Dr. Park that the Senate have an active role in determining hiring priorities. It would be in the best interest of the faculty for the Senate to be involved at some point.

Dr. Park noted that an official role has not been finalized. In the past the process began at this time of year (two weeks before the start of fall classes) for hiring for the next year. The process begins with the deans listing all possible openings, or lines that were not filled last time. Those openings are then taken to the Cabinet (via Dr. Park) to garner dollars in order to hire these positions. After that, the deans go back to their department chairs and sort out where the most needed positions are. This is where the process has broken down in places, when department chairs do not meet with their faculty.

The process then returns up the chain. The chairs meet with the deans, and the deans meet with the Provost. At this meeting, the University priority list of hiring is hashed out. Tier One is all the lines we can afford to hire. Tier Two is all those positions that may be filled, but are above the limit we can afford to hire. Tier Two positions have been filled when Tier One searches are unsuccessful.

It was noted that many departments have bylaws which govern departmental meetings and the actions of the department chair. Perhaps all departments need them.

It was cited that the Senate does not just represent disenfranchised faculty. It represents the University, and it should be involved, perhaps after the college priority lists are made.

Dr. Park stated that she could bring the college lists to the Senate, and the Senate would then work out the University priority list. The lists for the colleges from the deans will be finished about September 2. This would probably take about an hour or so, and could be done during a Senate meeting.

Dr. Park also stated that she and the deans are working on a 7-year hiring plan. At the Provost Council Retreat, they did a great deal of brainstorming on such things like what are our flagship programs, what old programs need to go because they are no longer needed, what percent of part-time faculty is acceptable, and the student/faculty ratio. Dr. Park stated that she would like to go through that same brainstorming exercise with the faculty. It is a fairly rigid program, taking about an hour for each category listed above. The deans are also supposed to be doing this with their colleges, and she would like to compare those results with the Senate's results.

Dr. Park then had to leave for another meeting.

It was noted that if these issues are discussed now, there will not be as many end-of-year arguments.

V. Other

It was noted that when a new program is proposed, often it is stated that there is no faculty needed. At the time, that is true, but what about two years down the road when the program has to be accredited? Then it will most likely need more faculty, but by then it will be an approved program and hiring more faculty or reallocating funds will be merely an administrative decision. This information should be made known earlier.

VI. Creative Scheduling

Dr. Edgerton noted this summer a committee was formed (which has met only once) to discuss other forms of class schedules, such as trimesters or students taking one class at a time for three weeks. If we moved to trimesters, we would basically treat the summer session as if it were a regular semester. The committee discussed issues like the pros and cons of trimesters, and how would they work in terms of faculty contracts. It was noted that right now, students never know until the last minute what will be offered in the summer, and so they cannot plan on it. The committee has not gone any further, so be aware of the discussion.

VII. Board of Regents Actions

It was noted that Regent Mercer pulled a coup at the May meeting and removed the current leadership. Regent Jasmin is now the chair, and Student Regent Hur is now vice chair. It was cited, however, that despite the leadership switch, not much changed. An economic summit was held on how the higher education system can stimulate the economy, but that was the only real change.

It was noted that the September Board of Regents meeting will be here on the MSU-Billings campus. There is an open time early on in the meeting, if anyone would like to bring an issue to the BOR. We also have a new Commissioner of Higher Education, Sheila Stearns, and Deputy Commissioner Joyce Scott has left for Texas A&M, so the writing proficiency project will most likely now be off the table.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

rjrm